

Creswell-Pozzale Ranch
Colorado-Concho Rivers Confluence Area
South of Leaday townsite
Voss Vicinity
Coleman County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3352

HABS
TEX
42-VOS.V,
9-

~~MEASURED DRAWINGS~~

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Building Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
CRESWELL-ROZZLE HOUSE

HABS
TEX
42-VOS.V,
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PART I. INTRODUCTION

Location: Located .1 mile north of Colorado River, to east side of Colorado River, 1.4 miles south of Leaday Crossing, (Hwy. 2134 and Colorado River), 1.3 miles west of the bridge over Bull Hollow Branch on the Elm Creek Road, Voss vicinity, Coleman County, State of Texas

USGS Leaday Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator
Coordinates: 14.435939.3488954

Present Owner: Creswell heirs, Bessie Mae Edmondson et al.; permanent easement to the Colorado River Municipal Water District, Big Spring, Texas

Present Occupant: abandoned; used for storage

Significance: The Creswell-Rozzle house is architecturally significant as a building and stylistic type, a stone L-shaped house with seven gables. Climatic adaptation and site orientation are important; the house is oriented to the Colorado River to the south to catch prevailing breezes. Craftsmanship is extraordinary, with superior stonework in the first building phase. The use of local materials is noteworthy. The stone was quarried on the site, and there is a surviving lime kiln in the vicinity (HAER No. TX-14). The ranch complex of carefully constructed outbuildings and fragments of stone corrals is culturally significant as the chief residence of one of Coleman County's earliest settling families. The house was constructed for the first of the Creswell family in the region and has associations with Jonathan Cook, an outstanding Texas stonemason with several related works in the area. In addition, the house structure and outbuildings are in a remarkably unchanged state and as a complex present a viable image of a working cattle ranch in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth.

PART II. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Dates of erection: 1880 and 1893. Datestones exist. A

carefully incised datestone is placed above an upper window of the first unit; the date of the second wing is scratched on a stone of one of the door openings.

2. Original and subsequent owners: The site is located on land originally patented to the School Commissioners of Fort Bend County in 1848, Blocks 49 and 50, Survey 224. It was purchased by Ambrose Creswell in the late 1870s, before 1878.¹ The first surviving records are dated later in the century, and reference is made to the Coleman County Courthouse, Deed Records unless otherwise noted.

1892 7 November 1892, 31:522, Ambrose Creswell and wife Martha A. Creswell to their son Lem Creswell, 160 acres off the Creswell's Bend tract

1920 13 December 1920, judgment, District Court Records 11:2, Fort Bend County School Lands to L. E. Creswell. (Evidently the land was still being purchased by Ambrose Creswell at his death. The Fort Bend County School Lands opposed the probation of the will for a settlement. L. E. Creswell as administrator of the estate could not prove that the debts had been paid, but the Fort Bend School Lands settled for cash to clear the title on the land. Since Ambrose Creswell died intestate, the courts partitioned the estate in portions to his surviving children: L. E. Creswell, Lizzie Catlin, A. W. Creswell, Maggie Creswell, Martha Scott, and other heirs.)

1944 6 October 1944, 251:532, heirs of Maggie Creswell to T. B. Rozzle. (Mrs. Tony Rozzle was Sarah Elizabeth Gatlin Rozzle, the daughter of Lizzie Catlin and granddaughter of Ambrose Creswell.)

1987 26-29 May 1987, District Clerk's office, judgment on condemnation proceedings, heirs of T. B. Rozzle (Bessie Mae Edmondson, Ambrose Creswell's great-granddaughter, et al.) grant of permanent easement to the Colorado River Municipal Water District.

3. Builder: The first unit of the house, built in 1880, can be attributed to stonemason Jonathan Cook, a native of Ireland, whose related work is the Rich Coffey house, dated 1881 (HABS No. TX-3353), located at the confluence of the Concho and Colorado Rivers. Other works related to the Creswell house and possibly works of Cook are the Ransbarger house, located

to the east in Runnels County; and the McLane-Hafner house on the Colorado River in Concho County, dated 1886 (HABS No. TX-3355).

4. Original plans and construction: No original drawings have been found. It is unlikely that any were ever produced for a vernacular structure of this sort. The house was built in two phases, both dated with datestones: the eastern unit was built first and a very carefully incised datestone ("1880") was placed above the upper south window; the second unit, to the west, has a date ("1893") scratched on a stone to the left of the new north door opening. Both phases of construction remain in a relatively unchanged state.
5. Alterations and additions: The first unit to be constructed, the 1880 east wing, probably had its principal entrance through the south door; this doorway is presently unsheltered, but a shadowline and repointing are evidence of a porch roof or hood over the upper south window of this wing. This window was originally constructed as a door opening, the filling below the window being of wood; however it should be noted that interior evidence indicates this wood filling is carefully carpentered and may be original work, possible indication of a planned door opening onto a porch or balcony which never materialized. The north porch of the 1893 wing was removed at some point in time; a long modern concrete slab appears to follow the original dimensions.

Concerning the masonrywork, the original mortar has been raked from the joints and has been replaced with a hard cement mortar.

B. Historical Context:

For the general historical overview which places the property in the context of the development of cattle ranching at the confluence of the Colorado and Concho Rivers please see HABS No. TX-3350.

The first of the Creswell family in the area was Ambrose Creswell, a native of Arkansas.² Creswell with his wife Martha and their children first camped on Elm Creek in southern Coleman County; he was occupying this site as early as 1877, according to Coleman County tax records for that year.³ The family moved to an existing log cabin on the present site on Christmas Eve, 1879. According to family tradition, Creswell purchased this land, which was to become known as Creswell's Bend, for two sides of bacon and a small amount of cash.⁴ He began the construction of the stone house the following year; soon the house was part of a sizeable complex of

well-constructed outbuildings and stone corrals. A large stone wing was added to the main house in 1893.

Ambrose Creswell's relatively small cattle operation on a few hundred acres was certainly overshadowed by the operations of the great Day Ranch, his nearest neighbor to the north and west, and his endeavors and successes are interesting for that region. In a region where all efforts were spent in the raising of livestock, Creswell began various types of cultivation and had a large garden as early as the fall of 1879. He visited the Days in September of that year with a gift of watermelons, and Mrs. Day noted in a letter that he had the only vegetable garden in the entire region.⁵

Ambrose and Martha Creswell raised their family at the Creswell's Bend Ranch, and these children settled in the area and into a typical local pattern of life among their ranching relations. A son, Lemuel Creswell, continued the operation of the ranch and later built a stone half-dugout across the river in Concho County (HABS No. TX-3356).⁶ Ambrose Creswell's daughter Elizabeth married a member of the Concho County ranching family of Gatlin.⁷ One of Elizabeth Creswell Gatlin's daughters married T. O. Rozzle, and the Rozzles operated the Creswell's Bend ranch until recent times. A Rozzle daughter, Bess Edmondson, is among the present-day Creswell-Rozzle heirs; she is Ambrose Creswell's great-granddaughter. Mrs. Edmondson and her co-heirs granted permanent easement to the Colorado River Municipal Water District in 1987. The house has been unoccupied since the late 1950s.⁸

In 1979 the Texas Water Commission granted permission to the Colorado River Municipal Water District, an entity based in Big Spring, to construct a large dam on the Colorado River. The site chosen was a location several miles downstream from Leaday, sixteen miles below the confluence of the Colorado and Concho Rivers. Early in the planning stages, a program was developed to address environmental concerns, including the impact of the proposed flood area on prehistoric and historic cultural resources. In 1980-1981 a survey of historic cultural resources was conducted by Freeman and Freeman under contract to Espey, Huston and Associates, a firm of Austin environmental consultants. Subsequently a number of other studies and amplifications of previous studies have been conducted. In early 1988 an Albuquerque, New Mexico, firm of environmental scientists, Mariah Associates, Inc., began further assessment of the area of the flood plain, including various archaeological investigations and assessments. Mariah has also acted in the role of coordinator of related projects, including this project: the recordation of nineteen endangered historic sites in the confluence area for the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Historic American Engineering Record. The sites were selected from a list compiled under the guidance of the Texas Historical Commission.

Construction was finished on the dam in the late summer of 1989. Called the Stacy Dam and Reservoir, the project will inundate approximately 19,200 acres, and the threat of inundation of the Creswell-Rozzle house is possible in the near future.

PART III. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Built on a wide flat plateau on a great bend of the Colorado River, this tall stone house was the most prominent landmark in the region for a century. The steeply-pitched rooflets over the half-story windows and the several gables of the intersecting main roofs give the house an aspect distinctive from other vernacular buildings in the immediate vicinity (HABS photos TX-3352-A-1 to A-9).
2. Condition of the fabric: The masonrywork is beginning to fail in several places, particularly along the east elevation. Also, the entire east unit has begun to settle and separate somewhat from the west unit, a situation visible on the north front. The masonry has been clumsily repointed in recent times. The south porch roof of the 1893 wing has collapsed. The wood shingle roof is in bad condition. While most elements of the interior are original and still in place, the interior has been badly neglected and is partially open to the weather.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The one-and-one-half-story T-shaped house is composed of two units constructed in two phases. The earlier east unit is approximately 6 feet wide with a depth, running north and south, of 29 feet. The second unit, or west wing, running east and west to form the leg of the T, is approximately 17 feet wide, the length being 18 feet. There are porches along both the north and south faces of this west wing, the south porch being approximately 8 feet wide, the north porch being approximately 5 feet wide.
2. Wall construction: Exterior walls are 21 inches thick. The limestone masonrywork is of good craftsmanship laid in regular coursings, the limestone of local origin. The original mortar has been raked from the joints and has been replaced with a hard cement mortar. Doors and windows have continuous sills and lintels of single long rough-cut blocks of limestone. A number of door and window openings are partially jammed by long thin continuous pieces of stone. The original lime-sand

mortar was probably produced at the nearby lime kiln on the Colorado River (HAER No. TX-14).

3. Porches, balconies: In the south face of the earlier wing a central lower doorway opens to a simple stone stoop; but over the window above this doorway a shadowline and repointing are indications of some sort of original gable-roofed porch or balcony, no longer existing. In the lintel block over this upper window occurs the incised "1880" date, and as this window opening was first laid up as a door opening, these facts seem to provide further evidence of this facade's being an original principal entrance with either a porch or porch-balcony with a hooded roof.

Along the south face of the later wing a long porch, now in a state of collapse, seems to retain few, if any, of its original elements. It appears to have always been a porch with a flat roof deck which provided a long balcony opening off the second floor west room; an original doorway opens from this room at the balcony level. The present day flooring for the porch itself is modern concrete slab.

The north facade of the new wing seems to have become the principal entrance after its construction in 1893; here there is another long concrete slab on stone footings but no evidence whatsoever, either in footings or wall straps or other evidence, of any sort of covered porch: an unsheltered central door to the new room and a side door to the older northeast room open onto this slab.

4. Chimneys: There is only one firebox in the house, located in the downstairs west room of the 1893 wing. The fireplace, of the same stone masonry as the house itself, is of the exterior type, with a stone chimneystack extending five courses above the roof ridge capped with a simple capping course. Another chimneystack, within the thickness of the wall, is located in the center of the north face of the older wing and served stove flues in the north rooms, but not the south rooms, of this wing.
5. Openings: Doorways, doors, and windows: The masonry treatment for the door and window openings is a uniform treatment of simple rough-cut stone lintels and sills. The doors are old panelled doors of the typical late Victorian style of two long panels over two short panels, the exception being a fairly modern door of the five-stacked-panels type hung in the doorway of the lower north face of the 1893 wing. The remaining window sashes, which vary in size, are all old 4-over-4 sashes.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The roofs of the two wings are intersecting steep-gabled roofs; there are separate rooflets over each upper window. Old wood shingles are still in place.
- b. Cornice: There is a strong simple treatment composed of a 1-inch by 12-inch wood member acting as a type of frieze, topped by a typical boxed cornice.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: The plan created by the T-shape results in a simple three-room arrangement with no corridors or passageways, simply two small rooms butted together in the 1880 east wing and a somewhat larger room created by the 1893 west wing, this room butted to the earlier unit at a right angle. This later west room became the primary entrance to the house from the main north approach drive.

The staircase to the half floor above is in the southeast room of the older wing.

- b. Second floor: The half-floor plan is identical to the one below; the stairs from the southeast lower room were constructed to rise in two directions to serve the upper southeast room and an upper landing between the northeast and west rooms. There is no partitioning in the southeast room at the stairs corner of the room; it is open into the well at this point.

2. Stairways: The stairs, which rise from the southeast room as noted, begin along the west wall in a straight run to the upper landing. At an intermediate landing another short run of steps ends in the upper southeast room. The risers and treads vary in dimension, the risers steep, the treads from 9 inches to 11 inches. There is a simple rectangular-section rail and very interesting balusters cut from 1-inch-thick pine in an open-work design of a knotted rope.

3. Flooring: In the upper story there is surviving old pine flooring, but the lower flooring has been removed. Presently, in the southeast room, the floorboards have been removed and the joists are exposed. In the other two downstairs rooms poured concrete slabs have replaced the old joisting and

wooden flooring.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The interior stone walls are covered with modern cement plaster; these wall surfaces may have been originally left naked stone, very rough, as was the case in at least two other contemporary stone houses in the vicinity, the Rich Coffey house (HABS No. TX-3353) and the McLane-Hafner house (HABS No. TX-3355). There is wooden partitioning between the north and south rooms of the east wing, both floors; it is simple one-board-thick, some random planks, some grooved (not beaded) boarding, all nailed vertically. The rooms are ceiled with beaded-boarding.
5. Decorative features: Aside from the stair balusters already noted, there are no decorative features in this simple vernacular house. There is a wooden mantelpiece in the first floor west room, the only room in the house with a fireplace; this mantelpiece is very simple with no moldings or decorations of any sort.
6. Heating: There is only one fireplace in the house, located in the large downstairs west room; another chimneystack serves stove flues in the north rooms of the older east wing.

D. Site:

1. General setting: The house entrance (1880 wing) probably originally faced south toward the river; the 1893 entrance was oriented to the north and to the present approach drive, which itself is an old roadbed. The house site is a wide flat plateau toward the center of the neck of Creswell's Bend, a long loop of the Colorado forming a panorama of the river and surrounding countryside.
2. Outbuildings: Adjacent to the house compound and approximately 10 feet from the southeast corner of the house is a collapsed storm cellar approximately 9 feet wide and 14 feet long (HABS photo TX-3352-B-1). About forty feet beyond the storm cellar to the southeast is a circular stone-and-concrete cooling tower, approximately 10 feet in diameter and 20 feet high (HABS photos TX-3352-C-1 and C-2). The lower chamber of the tower was used as a cooling room for milk, butter, and other perishables, fitted out with small stone shelves projecting from the curving wall.

Northeast of the house approximately 150 feet is the barnyard complex (HABS photos TX-3352-D-1 to D-3), consisting of two woodframe sheds or barns, approximately 20 feet by 25 feet and 12 by 15 feet, respectively. At the eastern end of the

barnyard is a concrete watering trough. Also in this area, adjacent to the west barn, are the stone foundations of an earlier structure, approximately 20 feet wide and 30 feet long, possibly the footings for the log house occupied by the Creswell family when they first took possession of the land.

3. Landscaping, enclosures: There are existing fragments of stone corrals at the barnyard northeast of the house and old wire fencing to enclose the immediate house compound. To the south of the 1893 wing is a very large mesquite tree with a low stone surrounding wall constructed to protect it.

.Prepared by:
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August 1989

PART IV. ENDNOTES

1. Martha Doty Freeman and Joe C. Freeman, A Cultural Resource Inventory of the Proposed Stacy Reservoir, Concho, Coleman and Runnels Counties, Texas, vol. II: Historical Cultural Resources, report prepared for the Colorado River Municipal Water District by Espey, Huston and Associates, Inc., Engineering and Environmental Consultants (Austin, Texas, March 1981), 4-8. The Creswell family were one of the few families in the immediate vicinity who held clear title to their land when entrepreneur William H. Day purchased all the surrounding lands in 1878.

2. Donald R. Abbe and Joseph E. King, "A Preliminary Report: Historical Resources within the Stacy Dam Project Area," draft of a report prepared for the Colorado River Municipal Water District by Mariah Associates, Inc., Environmental Consultants (Lubbock, Texas, June 1989), 75 and 76.

3. Ibid., 76.

4. Genealogical information and family traditions are quoted in Leona Bruce's essay, "Creswell Family," published in Coleman County Historical Commission, A History of Coleman County and Its People, vol I, (San Angelo, Texas: Anchor Publishing Company, 1985), 539.

5. Extracts of Mabel Doss Day Lea's letter, September 1879, are quoted in James Padgitt's essay, "Ranching in Coleman County," published in Coleman County Historical Commission, vol. I, 44-48.

6. For a discussion of Lem Creswell and a description of his half-dugout, see HABS No. TX-3356.

7. Abbe, 58.

8. Interview with James Stephenson, Leaday, 15 June 1989: interview by Patrick O'Neill, Mariah Associates, Inc.

PART V. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was sponsored by Mariah Associates, Inc., archaeologists; recorded under the supervision of Greg Kendrick, HABS regional coordinator, Denver. The project was completed during the summer of 1989 at the project field office at Houston and College Station, Texas. Project supervisor was Graham B. Luhn, A.I.A., architect; project architectural historian was Gus Hamblett, Texas A&M University; intern architects were Debbie Fernandez and Paul Neidinger; student architects were Brian Dougan, Robert Holton, Janna Johnson, Wayne Jones, and Pat Sparks, Texas A&M University; project photographer was Paul Neidinger, photographic processing by Laura McFarlane.